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RHMFISS/CG II MEF
RUHBABA/CG III MEF CAMP COURTNEY JA
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RUHBABA/CG THIRD MARDIV CAMP COURTNEY JA
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RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/COMFLEACT OKINAWA JA
RHMFISS/COMMARCORBASESJAPAN CAMP BUTLER JA
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RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA PRIORITY 0192
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RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA PRIORITY 0658
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NAHA 000214

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: ABROGATION OF THE US-JAPAN SECURITY TREATY
TAGS: [MARR](#) [PINS](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: LDP SEEKING SILVER LINING IN PENDING GUBERNATORIAL RACE

REF: NAHA 209

CLASSIFIED BY: Kevin K. Maher, Consul General, U.S. Consulate
General Naha, U.S. Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

1. (C) Summary: Conservative, pro-US/Japan alliance Okinawans selected the capable but not particularly popular Hirokazu NAKAIMA as their candidate for the November prefectural governor's election, then hoped the anti-alliance reformists would run two or more candidates and split the opposition vote. Those hopes were dashed when the reformists coalesced behind Keiko ITOKAZU, a female national diet member whose pacifist activities and glamour make her an attractive candidate in Okinawa. Okinawa LDP leadership plans to capitalize on Nakaima's executive experience while underplaying his inclination to support the alliance transformation and realignment planned by the USG and GOJ. With less than two months to go to the election, conservatives seem more actively engaged in hoping for reformist failure than pursuing conservative victory. End Summary.

Comparing the Candidates

¶2. (SBU) September 20 Hiroshi NAKAMATSU, Executive Director of LDP Okinawa, analyzed the gubernatorial race since House of Councilors member Keiko ITOKAZU has been named the unified reformist (anti-base) opponent to the LDP candidate, Okinawa Electric Power (Oki Den) Chairman Hirokazu NAKAIMA. Nakamatsu was relaxed and smiling at the resolution of the LDP presidential election, with 69% of Okinawan LDP voters choosing Shinzo Abe, with the remainder roughly evenly split between the other two contenders. Nakamatsu stopped smiling as he began discussing the pending gubernatorial race.

¶3. (U) Nakamatsu started with the positives, saying Nakaima was the most capable candidate for prefectural governor since former governor Junji Nishime. After graduating Tokyo University, Nakaima entered the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI). Following a career with MITI he moved to Okinawa to be an executive director of Oki Den. In 1990, Nakaima was appointed as a vice governor under the reformist Ota administration. Then he returned to Oki Den as a vice president. He has served as a chairman of the Federation of Okinawa Prefecture Economic and Business organizations.

¶4. (C) Nakamatsu's only direct mention of Nakaima's negative points was his lack of contact with ordinary people. Nakamatsu indirectly alluded to some other concerns, however. He lamented that a man visibly showed signs of a drinking problem, especially once he reached a certain age. A younger woman, in contrast, looked fresh and untainted. Nakamatsu said he was struggling with how to attract women to support Nakaima, and asked in apparent sincerity whether the pol-mil chief, as a woman, had any good ideas. Note: Numerous conversations with politically knowledgeable Okinawans over the past six months have

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drawn a darker picture of Nakaima. He is directly and scathingly critical of others' failings, especially when he has been drinking. Now widowed, he long had a reputation as a womanizer. End note.

¶5. (C) Nakamatsu went into greater, and gloomier, detail about Nakaima's weakness as a candidate when compared to Itokazu. Politics had more to do with popular appeal than with ability, Nakamatsu said, and thus Itokazu would be a formidable opponent.

Compared with the 71 year-old Nakaima, 58 year-old Itokazu is quite attractive. She is much closer to the common people because of her constituent outreach for 12 years as a prefectural assembly member and the past two years as a national diet member. Itokazu's peace movement activities and human rights campaign were well-regarded, and all contributed to her high name recognition. For more details on Itokazu, see reftel.

¶6. (SBU) Nakamatsu groaned that every candidacy needed a bumper sticker, and he could think of none for Nakaima. Itokazu, in contrast, was ripe for packaging and Nakamatsu rattled off three or four examples of snappy, four-character sayings playing on her name, popularity, and pacifist background.

Comparing Platforms and Hoping for Reformist Implosion

¶7. (SBU) Nakamatsu noted it took reformists nearly six months to choose a unified candidate. Heated arguments generated ill will between the parties, and restoring relations would be difficult. In particular, former OPG treasurer Tokushin YAMAUCHI was unhappy about being pushed off the campaign stage by his own protégé, which ended the prospect of any future Yamauchi candidacy.

¶8. (SBU) Since the three most leftist of the six reformist parties (the Japanese Communist Party, the Jiyu Rengo, and the Socialist Party) had been forced to give up on their preferred candidate, Nakamatsu predicted they would insist on a strongly anti-base platform. Since the Democratic Party of Japan and independent National Diet Member Mikio SHIMOJI's Sozo Party

would not, for example, support a platform that included abrogating the US-Japan Security Treaty, the platform fight was the next serious challenge to reformist unity. Nakamatsu hoped the losers in the platform fight would detract from Itokazu's chances by withholding their active support. Note: September 23-24 press reports indicated Nakamatsu's hopes may not be in vain. Shimoji was quoted as saying he would not decide how Sozo would support Itokazu until after the reformist platform discussions are complete. End note.

¶9. (C) Regardless of the platform's details, the reformist camp would try to make military base issues the center of the race. Social welfare, medical and educational issues would follow at some distance. The reformists hoped to directly engage Nakaima on the issue--which Nakamatsu said would be death for his campaign. No candidate could be elected governor of Okinawa,

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Nakamatsu claimed, without saying there were too many bases and the burden on Okinawa must be reduced. Thus, Nakamatsu said Nakaima could not officially embrace the agreed Marine Corps Air Station Futenma Relocation Facility (FRF) during the campaign.

¶10. (C) Current Governor Keiichi INAMINE has previously stressed this same point. August 28 Inamine told us the acceptability of base-related initiatives depended on whether the Okinawan public perceived them as originating in Okinawa, or being pushed down from Tokyo. The FRF had been conceived in Tokyo. For Okinawa conservatives to embrace the FRF plan, Inamine insisted, would all but guarantee the reformists the governorship. On September 11, Nakaima told us he planned to follow Inamine's advice and maintain a vague stance in public on the question of U.S. base realignment in Okinawa, simply repeating that he would listen to all views before making a decision to support or not the realignment plan.

¶11. (C) Nakamatsu said the conservative side would place the highest priority on economic issues for the election, followed by social services and welfare. Base issues would be listed below education and welfare. This varied slightly from what Nakaima had told us, that he considered preserving and promoting Okinawan culture, environment, education and health issues his main focus. Economic development would come second, because money is a necessary tool to achieve the primary goals. Nakaima said base issues could not be avoided altogether, but he would stress that there are many other issues that must be dealt with if Okinawa is to move forward.

¶12. (C) Comment: Conservative Okinawans drew great comfort from the reformists' squabble over the gubernatorial candidate, and almost stunned by the arrival of the worst-case scenario: reformists united behind Itokazu. The conservative strategy is, well, conservative: emphasizing Nakaima's credentials, creating an awareness of his love for things Okinawan, while masking his support for alliance transformation and realignment. The conservatives will have to overcome their shock, and Nakaima activate his campaign, to defeat the reformist challenge. At the moment, the LDP leadership in Okinawa continues to be unwilling to confront the reformists on the importance of U.S. bases for Japan's national security, nor is it willing to stand up and argue the benefits to Okinawa of the base realignment plan agreed to by the U.S. and Japanese governments. Instead, the LDP hopes to avoid debating base issues in the campaign. We very much doubt they will be able to do so. End Comment.

MAHER